

PRESENTATION BY THE UNITED STATES OF A STATUE TO ISRAEL

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
NINETY-FOURTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION
ON
House Joint Resolution 406

OCTOBER 7, 1975

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PRESENTATION BY THE UNITED STATES OF A STATUE TO ISRAEL

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1975

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met at 3:30 p.m., in room H-328, the Capitol, Hon. Helen S. Meyner presiding.

Mrs. MEYNER. I would like to welcome you here, Congressman Ottinger, and Leon Gildesgame and your wife.

Congressman Ottinger, why don't you just go ahead with your statement.

STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD L. OTTINGER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Mr. OTTINGER. Mr. and Mrs. Leon Gildesgame are the benefactors, purchasing the statue, and arranging for its donation to the State of Israel. The artist is a man named Sidney Loeb from Chicago.

Mrs. MEYNER. I see.

Mr. OTTINGER. Madam Chairman and distinguished members of the subcommittee:

I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before you today to briefly speak to you about House Joint Resolution 406, which provides for the presentation by the President, on behalf of the people of the United States, of a statue of Abraham Lincoln to the people of Israel.

I would like to introduce you at this time to the two individuals who accompany me here today—the present owners of this full-life Lincoln statue—Mr. and Mrs. Leon Gildesgame. It is entirely due to the hard work and dedicated efforts of Leon and Ruth Gildesgame that this most meaningful project is before you today, and it is through their generous donation of this award-winning statue sculpted by Chicago artist Sidney Loeb, that this demonstration of our country's affinity with Israel will hopefully be able to take place.

Abraham Lincoln symbolized for me and for millions of other Americans and to people all over the world, the cherished dreams of freedom, human dignity, and hope for mankind. It is these same dreams under which the State of Israel was born and under which it continues to thrive. Therefore, it is a most significant gesture for the

people of our great democracy to present a statue of Abraham Lincoln—a man who embodies the ideals of democracy and freedom—to the people of Israel, who share with us these deeply held human values.

President Lincoln strove for a society in which there was equal justice for all. Indeed, these ideals to which he dedicated his life are derived from Hebrew prophetic traditions which are also alive in the State of Israel today. Thus this symbolic gesture of both American-Israeli friendship, and of dedication by two free peoples to a shared body of beliefs, is a most worthy and fitting one.

Among the many groups which have expressed their strong support of this resolution are the America-Israel Friendship League, the America-Israel Cultural Foundation, and the American Jewish Committee. In addition, Senator Jacob Javits has indicated his strong backing of this measure, and he will be the sponsor of this resolution in the other body.

The State Department commented most favorably on the legislation. I have no objection to the Department's recommendation in its report that the last sentence of the resolution be stricken to make it absolutely clear that there will be no expense involved on the part of the U.S. Government, in fact, all transportation costs will be borne by the Zim-Israel Navigation Co., the Gildesgame family, and the municipality of Ramat Gan, where the statue will be placed.

I would like to personally thank Chairman Hays for his invaluable advice and support. I understand his inability to be with us today, but he has been very helpful to us in bringing this project along. I urge that all members of this subcommittee join in these efforts so that this meaningful expression of good relations between two great democratic peoples can be carried out.

Thank you.

Mrs. MEYNER. Thank you, Congressman Ottinger. I believe you have a picture of the statue. It might be interesting to hold that up or pass it around. Abraham Lincoln was a tall man. How tall is the statue?

STATEMENT OF LEON GILDESGAME, MOUNT KISCO, N.Y.

Mr. GILDESGAME. The statue and the pedestal is 92 inches.

Mrs. MEYNER. And in feet, that is what? My mathematics aren't that quick.

Mr. GILDESGAME. Seven and a half feet.

Mrs. MEYNER. A little over life size.

Mr. GILDESGAME. Yes, a little over life size. He was very tall. I think he was 6 feet 8 or thereabouts. I have his exact measurements which I can give you. He was 6 foot 4 without shoes and heels.

Mrs. MEYNER. Thank you. It is a very handsome statue, and it is very good of you to make this presentation. I think there was, in a letter to you, Congressman Ottinger, from Chairman Thomas Morgan, a point he made, that while the Department of State endorsed the project, it is recommended that the last sentence of the resolution be stricken to insure that there would, in fact, be no cost to the U.S. Government.

Mr. OTTINGER. As I indicated in my statement, that is perfectly agreeable.

Mrs. MEYNER. What about insuring the statue en route?

Mr. GILDESGAME. I will take care of that.

As a matter of fact, it is insured now, and originally insured as well, and I am taking care of all that.

Mrs. MEYNER. How will it be transported to Israel?

Mr. GILDESGAME. It will have to be properly packed at the foundry where it is now, and delivered to the Port of New York when there is a Zim ship ready to take it. The expense involved in packing it and delivering it to New York, I will see to. No Government department will have to bear any expense. After it arrives in Israel, the municipality of Ramat Gan, which I saw only 6 weeks ago, will take care of all expenses from the moment of its arrival, including costs of its erection and of its pedestal. A sculptor will make a special pedestal of Israeli rock with inscriptions of several quotations of Abraham Lincoln's, which were inspired by his reading of the prophets of the Bible. The pedestal will have on it, in English, Lincoln's statement and, underneath, in Hebrew, the quotation from the prophets of the Bible by which it was inspired.

We all know Lincoln was brought up with the Bible of which he was a lifelong admirer. He constantly quoted it. During the last 3 years I have studied Lincoln's sayings at various times and circumstances. And, Congressman Ottinger, I have a mass of documents showing how close Lincoln was to the highest principles of prophetic ethics and morality, including the concepts of liberty and freedom.

Mrs. MEYNER. Have you determined yet what quotes you are going to use on the base of the statue?

Mr. GILDESGAME. Not yet. I have two professors from Tel Aviv University, and one, an American by the way, who is at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. I put the problems before them and said, "I want you to give me several quotations from Abraham Lincoln's speeches or letters and their equivalent or source from our Bible." That is what they are working on, and I shall get it within the next week or two and I will submit it to Congressman Ottinger because he has to approve of everything in this matter. May I say here how grateful I am to him and to Ogden Reid and to all of you distinguished Representatives for all the help given me to carry this forward.

Mr. OTTINGER. We will be pleased to let the committee know what that selection is. I would like to say that the Gildesgames have been working on this for a goodly number of years. They have put forth a fantastic effort.

Mrs. MEYNER. I think it is a wonderful thing that you have done; no token but a great show of support and friendship between Israel and the United States, and you are certainly to be highly commended for taking on this project and carrying it through.

Mr. GILDESGAME. Thank you very much. There is one other reason, if I may add, why I have taken this on in addition to all the other reasons mentioned by Congressman Ottinger. It is this: there is a striking similarity in the histories of the two peoples; the American people and their struggles and their aims and objectives, and all that the Jewish people endured. It is enough to read the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights and the Constitution of America, and then to read their origins in the Bible. I wanted to emphasize the

friendship between America and Israel apart from politics. I want to raise it to the highest standard of our religious culture, ethics, and history. It does not involve armies, money, or politics.

At first I had an offer by the Department of State to take it on, entirely by themselves, and to present the Lincoln statue to the State of Israel as a gift from the Government of America to the Government of Israel. I thanked them very much, but I said, "governments come and governments go, but the people of America are here forever and the people of Israel are here forever." I want it as a link of people to people rather than from government to government. I took the same position with the American Bicentennial Administration. Dr. Blue of that administration was very anxious that I give him the statue. Again I held back—I wanted more than a 1-year observance. This is eternal; the eternity of the Holy Land, the eternity of the Jewish people; and the eternal struggle and example to the world of what America will eternally stand for.

For all these reasons I thought of Abraham Lincoln. He was such a wonderful man himself, and he suffered, God knows, because of his fight for justice and liberty. Therefore, I thought to myself this is the right person, the great American, Honest Abe: he belongs there, in Israel as well as here.

Mrs. MEYNER. A very fine sentiment.

Congressman Buchanan.

Mr. BUCHANAN. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I would certainly join in commending Mr. and Mrs. Gildesgame for this wonderfully generous gift and most meritorious idea, and our colleague for his resolution and his leadership in this matter. I feel sure that our committee will look favorably upon this resolution with appreciation for your generosity, sir. I think perhaps we ought to put Mr. Gildesgame on a lecture tour, having heard you speak, to help people really appreciate what our country really stands for and that which lies at the heart of our freedom.

You were speaking about the similarity between Israel and the United States, and your reference to Scripture. I would call your attention to the last half of the eighth chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy beginning I think with the seventh verse and with the words, "For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into the good land."

The reference, of course, is to the Promised Land but I never read it without thinking of our own country, and the similarity in the Scriptures, between what is happening in the United States and in Israel, not only since its rebirth but in the long history of the nation.

Mr. GILDESGAME. Only yesterday I read a piece. I have so many books on Lincoln. One interesting thing which has nothing to do with history but with character. He quoted the Bible saying: "With the sweat of your brow you shall eat your bread." Lincoln said: With the sweat of your brow, and don't have the sweat of other people's brows, whether it's slaves or other people and you come and eat without having worked for it. Lincoln said that, and that concept comes from the Bible. There are so many other similarly beautiful thoughts expressed. It is fascinating to read them. He is a great personality, a wonderful man, a model to mankind.

Mr. BUCHANAN. Madam Chairman, I am constrained to say that it is deeply gratifying to hear these wonderful words from our distinguished guest and from our distinguished colleague in praise of the founder of my party. We are very happy to share him.

Mrs. MEYNER. That is right. We keep forgetting that. He was an enlightened Republican.

Mr. OTTINGER. As is Mr. Buchanan.

Mrs. MEYNER. Yes, as is my colleague from Alabama, very enlightened; yes.

Mr. BUCHANAN. Thank you.

Mrs. MEYNER. Thank you very, very much, Mr. Gildesgame. We are deeply appreciative of Representative Ottinger and your coming down, both of you, to make this presentation. Again I want to apologize or explain that the chairman, Mr. Hays, was called to Ohio on an emergency matter. He just left a half hour ago and was very sorry not to have had an opportunity to meet you and greet you. Thank you again very much indeed.

Mr. GILDESGAME. May I take this opportunity of thanking Congressman Hays for his beautiful letters that I received fully approving of the idea, wholeheartedly so. I think it's so good to know, and the same is true of Senator Sparkman and many other Senators and Congressmen who wrote me such letters that I feel very proud that I am really doing something. I didn't realize that I was doing something that is so really worthwhile.

Mrs. MEYNER. Thank you very much.

We will stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:45 p.m., the subcommittee adjourned.]

APPENDIX

LETTER FROM HON. THOMAS E. MORGAN, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, TO HON. RICHARD L. OTTINGER, JULY 30, 1975, TRANSMITTING STATE DEPARTMENT REPORT ON HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 406

COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, D.C., July 30, 1975.

HON. RICHARD L. OTTINGER,
U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR DICK: Enclosed please find a copy of a report which the Committee has received on your bill, H.J. Res. 406, legislation which would provide for the presentation of a statue of Abraham Lincoln to Israel.

You will note that while the Department of State endorses the project, it has recommended that the last sentence of the Resolution be stricken to insure that there would, in fact, be no cost to the United States Government.

Because H.J. Res. 406 has been referred to the Subcommittee on International Operations, I have forwarded the State Department report to its Chairman, the Honorable Wayne L. Hays, for his information and use.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

THOMAS E. MORGAN,
Chairman.

REPORT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE TO HON. THOMAS E. MORGAN,
CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, DATED JULY
29, 1975, ON HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 406

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, D.C., July 29, 1975.

HON. THOMAS E. MORGAN,
Chairman, Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Secretary has asked me to thank you for your letter of May 7 requesting the Department's comments concerning House Joint Resolution 406 to provide for the presentation to Israel of a statue of Abraham Lincoln.

The Department understands that the costs of transporting and installing the statue to be donated by Mr. Leon Gildesgame would be borne, *inter alia*, by the Zim-Israel Navigation Company, the America-Israel Cultural Foundation and the municipality of Ramat Gan. Provided the presentation would involve no expense to the U.S. Government and the presentation is acceptable to the Government of Israel, the Department is pleased to endorse this worthwhile project. To insure that there would, in fact, be no cost to the U.S. Government, the Department recommends that the last sentence of House Joint Resolution 406 be stricken.

The Office of Management and Budget advises that from the standpoint of the Administration's program there is no objection to the submission of this report.

Sincerely,

ROBERT J. McCLOSKEY,
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations.

(S)

TEXT OF HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 406 AS AMENDED BY THE
SUBCOMMITTEE

Joint Resolution To provide for the presentation by the United States to Israel of a statue of Abraham Lincoln to be donated by Leon and Ruth Gildesgame, of Mount Kisco, New York.

Whereas President Abraham Lincoln symbolizes for millions of Americans the cherished dreams of freedom, human dignity, and hope for mankind;

Whereas the people of the State of Israel share with the American people those dreams which Abraham Lincoln symbolizes; and

Whereas Leon and Ruth Gildesgame, of Mount Kisco, New York, are the owners of an award-winning statute of Abraham Lincoln which they have expressed an interest in donating to the United States in order that it may be given as a gift from the people of the United States to the people of Israel: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

That the President (1) shall accept, on behalf of the United States, a statue of Abraham Lincoln from Leon and Ruth Gildesgame, of Mount Kisco, New York, and (2) shall present such statue to the people of Israel on behalf of the people of the United States.

(9)



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